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ADVENT 2B

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

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Second Sunday in Advent - Year B
6th December 2026

Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

706 STF – Longing for light, we wait in darkness OR

174 STF – Light a candle in a darkened place

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

58 STF – Lord, I come before Your throne of grace OR

106 STF – God whose almighty word

Readings: Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

Hymn:

189 STF – Wild and lone the prophet's voice OR

264 STF – Make way, make way for Christ the King

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

738 STF – There is a new heaven; there is a new earth OR

183 STF – Praise to the God who clears the way

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

255 STF – The kingdom of God is justice and joy OR

503 STF – Love divine, all loves excelling

Blessing

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Call to worship

Holy, holy, holy Lord,
As we come into your presence,
Trusting in your unconditional love for us,
And the light of your Spirit, inspiring each of us today.

Uplift our time of worship, we pray, O God.

Amen.[1]

Hymn:
706 STF – Longing for light, we wait in darkness OR
174 STF – Light a candle in a darkened place

Opening Prayers

Spirit of the living, loving, invisible God,
draw us close to creation, we pray.

[Pause]

On this Lord's day,
In this season of Advent,
As we prepare to open our hearts to you, O God,
We come to you in worship,
For by you all things are made, and we give thanks and praise.

Let us face this day renewed and refreshed, to share the concerns of yesterday,
For we are one community, life breathed by God, to be the living poetry exclaiming the kingdom of God by our words, actions, thoughts and lives.

Come amongst us, as we worship,
Forgive us, and set us free, we pray,

Amen.[2]

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Resources needed: a loud hailer/cone of paper, toy train or road track, honey, faux fur coat or scarf, belt, snack in the shape of a locust (or if you feel brave an actual insect: https://www.crunchycritters.com). Jug of water and tray/bowl/small paddling pool.

[1] Call to worship written by Tim Baker

[2] Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

Note: The following dramatic retelling brings together the Isaiah and Mark passages. It can be retold on a larger scale, as here, with a number of volunteers involved or more simply by just holding up the props at the relevant moments.

Choose a few volunteers to help out with one chosen to be John the Baptist. Start at the back or side of the worship space and tell the story of how it was foretold that Jesus was coming. Follow the script below:

Narrator: Long ago, God wanted the world to know that Jesus was coming and so they were told to get themselves ready. John the Baptist was the messenger.

John (using the loud hailer): Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight!

Volunteers build the toy train or road track as straight as possible.

Narrator: John was an interesting person and caused a stir wherever he went, partly because of what he wore.

Dress 'John the Baptist' in the faux fur coat and belt, hold the jar of honey and eat the snack. You can have some fun with this as each volunteer passes an item to 'John'.

Narrator: But there was much more to John than what he looked like. He had a powerful message to share that came directly from God and he spent much of his time baptising people with water to show they had said sorry and turned away from doing wrong things.

John pours the water from the jug into the bowl or small paddling pool.

Narrator: John wanted everyone to know that it was almost time for Jesus to arrive and that they would see even more incredible things when he was with them. In this time of advent we too are waiting for Jesus so we too should be wondering how we can get ready. Not just in our preparations for Christmas, but in who we are and what our lives look like. Let's be praying that we too have room to welcome Jesus and be ready to be changed by God's own son at work in our lives.[3]

Hymn:
58 STF – Lord, I come before Your throne of grace OR
106 STF – God whose almighty word

Readings: Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

Hymn:
189 STF – Wild and lone the prophet's voice OR
264 STF – Make way, make way for Christ the King

[3] All Age Talk written by Gail Adcock

Reflections on the readings

There is something rather strange about the way the Bible begins its Christmas preparations. We might expect angels, shepherds, a stable, perhaps a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes. Instead, we get a voice crying in the wilderness, we get deserts and rough ground, we get a prophet telling people to prepare.

And before any of that, we hear these extraordinary words from Isaiah: "Comfort, O comfort my people."

Is that where you need to begin this year? Not with the decorations, or shopping or the nativity sets, but with comfort. As we look out into the world nearing the end of 2026, it seems like our society is full of people craving comfort: people grieving, people who are lonely, people who are frightened about the future, people who are exhausted by the demands of everyday life, people who have lost faith in the possibility of change, and people who are simply trying to get through one more day.

"Comfort, O comfort my people."

These words were spoken to people who knew what it was to be displaced, to lose what was familiar, and to wonder whether the future held anything worth hoping for. Isaiah doesn't offer them a cheerful distraction, he offers them a promise: this story is not over, the wilderness will not last for ever, God has not abandoned you.

Do you need to hear that promise again this year? As you go through the motions of Christmas preparation, can you get away from pretending that everything is wonderful, and instead remembering that even in the hardest seasons of life, the story is not over. There is still hope.

It’s important to note, however, that Isaiah's message doesn't stop with comfort. There is work to be done. "Prepare the way of the Lord," the prophet declares. "Make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

Then John the Baptist takes up the same image centuries later: a voice crying in the wilderness, a call to prepare the way.

It's a striking image, isn't it? Because roads don't simply appear, they have to be made. Obstacles have to be cleared, rough ground has to be levelled, sometimes an entire bridge or platform has to be assembled, or a new route found.

Perhaps this is where Advent becomes more challenging. It is one thing to hope that God will come into our world, but quite another to ask what we might need to change in order to make room for the divine.

- What obstacles stand in the way of compassion?
- What barriers keep people from belonging?
- What habits prevent us from seeing the needs of our neighbours?
- What inequalities have we become so accustomed to that we barely notice them any more?

We can pray for peace while refusing to listen to those with whom we disagree. We can sing about love while making people feel unwelcome. We can celebrate the birth of Jesus while ignoring the people who most need the hope he brings. Preparing the way is not simply about making ourselves feel spiritually ready for Christmas, it is about making our lives, our churches and our communities more ready for the kingdom Jesus proclaimed.

The reading from 2 Peter introduces another challenge: the writer reminds us that God's sense of time is not the same as ours; a thousand years may be like a day.

Do you know something about impatience? Are you one of those people who wants answers *now*, change *now*, the world to be fair *now*? When it isn't, we can become discouraged, we look at the news and see war, injustice, poverty and environmental destruction. We look at our communities and see needs that seem too great for the resources available. We look at our churches and wonder whether the things we do really make any difference.

Is the temptation to give up? To assume that because change is slow, change is impossible? The writer of 2 Peter invites us to see waiting differently: God's patience is not indifference, nor is the apparent delay proof that nothing is happening. Waiting is not the same as doing nothing.

The passage asks what sort of people we ought to be as we wait for God's promised future, and that is a question worth sitting with. Christian hope is not a spectator sport. We are not simply waiting for God to sort everything out while we get on with our lives, rather we are invited to live now as though God's promised future matters. We are invited to practice peace before the world is peaceful, to show mercy before every injustice is put right, to care for creation before the damage is undone, to build communities of belonging before every division has been healed.

We cannot do everything, but each of us can do something.

And perhaps faithfulness is learning to do that something, again and again, even when the results are not immediately visible.

John the Baptist offers one final image, as he appears in the wilderness, dressed in camel's hair, eating locusts and wild honey. He is not exactly the sort of person you would expect to find at the centre of a carefully organised religious celebration. He doesn't arrive with a polished presentation or a carefully managed message, but with a clear call to repentance, to turn around, to change direction.

God doesn't always come to us in the places we expect, or in the ways we would prefer. Sometimes God meets us in the wilderness. John points beyond himself, he knows that he is not the centre of the story, he knows that someone greater is coming, and he is preparing the way.

This Advent, can you make room for something beyond your own preferences, your own traditions and your own understanding? Are you willing to discover that God might be doing something new, in people you have overlooked, in communities you have underestimated, in voices you have not been willing to hear?

Advent asks us to remain open to that possibility.

The world is not yet as it should be, and many of us are still walking the road of wilderness: the way in the desert is not yet finished, the promises of God have not yet been fully realised.

In the midst of that, Isaiah speaks comfort, Peter calls for patience and faith, John calls us to prepare the way, and together they offer us a vision of hope that is both a gift and a responsibility. The gift is that God has not abandoned the world, but the responsibility is that we are invited to help make it ready.

Perhaps this week we could each ask ourselves a simple question: what is one thing I could do to make a little more room for hope?

We do not have to build the whole road, or solve every problem. We do not have to know exactly what comes next. We are simply called to prepare the way, where we are, with what we have. Because the God who comes to us in Jesus is not waiting for a perfect world: God comes into this one, in all its wilderness and uncertainty, sorrow and its

possibility, all its grief and all its joy, in all the mixed and sometimes very painful emotions of this season. God comes.

And the promise of Advent is that, even here, a new beginning is possible. So may we be people who offer comfort to the weary, who work patiently for a more just world, and who prepare the way for love to take root.

May we keep clearing the obstacles.
May we keep building the road.
And may we keep making room for hope.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection

- Isaiah begins with the words, "Comfort, O comfort my people." Where do you see a need for comfort in your community, and how might we as a church offer it in practical ways?
- Preparing the way means more than waiting. What obstacles might we need to remove, personally or as a church, to make our community more welcoming, just and compassionate?
- When change is slow and hope is difficult to sustain, what helps you keep going? Where might God be inviting you to take one small step towards a better future?[4]

Hymn:
738 STF – There is a new heaven; there is a new earth OR
183 STF – Praise to the God who clears the way

Prayers of intercession

Let us pray.
God of hope and promise,
In the wilderness, you speak words of comfort.
In times of waiting, you call us to faithfulness.
And in Jesus, you come among us to show us a different way of living.

As we prepare for Christmas, open our hearts to the needs of your world, and teach us to become bearers of your hope.

Pause

God of comfort,
We pray for all who are weary.
For those who are grieving a loved one, facing an uncertain future, struggling with illness, or carrying burdens that others cannot see.
For those who feel forgotten, those who are lonely, and those for whom the coming of Christmas brings more sadness than celebration.
May they find comfort in your presence and kindness through the people around them.

Help us to notice those who might otherwise be overlooked, and give us the courage to offer not simply words of sympathy, but practical care and companionship.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

[4] Reflection written by Tim Baker

God of justice and peace,
We pray for a world in which so many people long for a straight path through difficult terrain.
We remember those living amid war and violence, those displaced from their homes, those seeking refuge, and those whose lives are shaped by poverty, oppression or discrimination.

We pray for all who work to bring peace, defend human rights, and build a fairer world.

Give wisdom to those who lead nations, courage to those who challenge injustice, and compassion to those who have the power to change lives.
Where there are barriers between people, help us build bridges.
Where there is hatred, encourage understanding.
Where there is despair, kindle hope.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of creation, we pray for our beautiful and fragile world.
As we hear the promise of a new heaven and a new earth, remind us of our responsibility for the world we inhabit today.
We remember communities already suffering the effects of climate change, those facing floods, droughts and extreme weather, and those whose livelihoods depend upon a threatened natural world.

Challenge us where we have been careless.
Encourage us where we have grown weary.
Help us to make choices that protect the earth and enable future generations to flourish.
May our hope for the future be seen in the care we take of your creation today.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God who calls us to prepare the way,
We pray for your Church, and for this congregation.

In this season of Advent, help us look beyond familiar words and traditions to the heart of the Gospel.
Show us where our doors need to open wider, where our assumptions need to change, and where our service could make a greater difference.
Help us to be a community where the lonely find friendship, where questions are welcomed, where difference is respected, and where people encounter the generosity of your love.

May we not simply celebrate the coming of Christ, but prepare the way for his love to be made visible in our lives.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of patience and perseverance,
We pray for those who have been waiting a long time.

Those waiting for a diagnosis, for treatment, for a home, for work, for reconciliation, or for news from someone they love.
We remember those who have prayed for change and have yet to see it, and those who have become discouraged by the slow pace of justice.
Sustain them in the waiting.
Give them strength for today and hope for tomorrow.
And show us how we might stand alongside them, sharing their burdens and helping to bring about the change for which they long.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of the coming kingdom,
As we continue our Advent journey, help us to be people of patient hope.
When the road seems long, keep us faithful.
When the world seems dark, help us to shine with kindness.
When we feel powerless, remind us that small acts of love still matter.

And when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, may we remember all that his coming asks of us: to welcome the stranger, comfort the sorrowful, seek justice, make peace, and love our neighbours as ourselves.

We offer these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, the one who comes among us and calls us into new life.

Amen.[5]

We will now take up the offering.

On this holy Lord's day, we give you thanks for all that we have received, O God.
As we make our offering this day, accept these gifts, and the gifts of each and every one of us gathered here in this room. Help us to make wise decisions about the use of these resources, that your Kingdom might come, your will be done.
In Jesus name we pray,
Amen.[6]

Hymn:
255 STF – The kingdom of God is justice and joy OR
503 STF – Love divine, all loves excelling

Blessing

May we go from this place, uplifted and inspired to follow the invitation of your Spirit, the invitation to get involved with your restoring, healing, comforting mission, the invitation to share the love we have received with all around us.

May we go, by your grace, O God, and serve you in peace.

Amen.[7]

[5] Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

[6] Additional prayers by Tim Baker

[7] Additional prayers by Tim Baker